(b) Varities which could produce good quality tobacco and high yields comparable to Brazil and Zimbabwe would enhance be prospects for increasing exports.

(c) to (e) the World tobacco production & consumption trends are being assessed on a continous basis. There is demand for flavourful/semiflavourful tobacco in the overseas markets the production of which in India is limited. Decline in world consumption of dark cigarette tobacco has also been witnessed. With the devaluation of Zimbabwe & Brazilian currencies their products have become price competitive. Further, Indonesia has also emerged as a new exporter of tobacco & tobacco products.

Supply of fertilizer to Tobacco Farmers

2043. SHRI YEERA NARAYANASWAMY: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Tobacco Board has formulated any scheme to supply fertilizers to tobacco farmers on time;

(b) whether it is a fact that in various parts of the country, tobacco farmers have not received fertilizers in time;

(c) if so, what steps Tobacco Board are taking to coordinate with various agencies to help farmers in this regard, with details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) Tobacco Board is acting as 'facilitator' for procurement and distribution of fertilizers with the objective of bulk/centralised purchases to ensure timely and economic supply at controlled price.

(b) All fertilizers were supplied in time except Sulphate of Potash (SoP) which was in short supply during the month of May and June, 1998.

(c) The Tobacco Board is liasing with the Indian Potash Ltd., which is the major improter of SoP, to have ready stocks for the forthcoming cropping season.

Upgradation of trade related office

2044. SHRI DRUPAD BORGOHAIN: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether his Ministry has decided to upgrade the Director General's Foreign Trade Office at Guwahati to a full-fledged Regional Office;

(b) whether Government also propose upgradation of Agriculture and Processed Foods Export Development Authority's office at Guwahati;

(c) if so, to what extent;

(d) whether Govoernment are in favour of giving sufficient financial and administrative powers to MMTC, STC, Spices Board etc;

(e) if so, to what extent;

(f) whether Government propose to set-up a regional office of India Institute of Foreign Trade at Guwahati; and

(g) if so, by when?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) Yes, Sir. The regional office of the Directorate General of Foreign Trade at Guwahati has been upgraded from the level of Deputy Director General of Foreign Trade to the level of It. Director General of Foreign Trade with effect from 25.9.1998.

(b) and (c) There is no such proposal at present.

(d) and (e) MMTC and STC are MOU signing companies and are vested with financial and administrative powers as per the instructions issued by the Department of Punlic Enterprises from time to time. There is also a functional Board on each of the Corporations to guide and monitor the activities of these Corporations which includes Government representatives.

(f) and (g) There is no such proposal at present.